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The Haystack Prayer Meeting

By EDWARD WARREN CAPEN, Ph.D.



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14 Beacon Street - Boston, Mass.



The Haystack Monument at Williamstown.

The Haystack Prayer Meeting.

BY EDWARD WARREN CAPEN, PH.D.

One hundred years ago there might have been seen on a late July or early August afternoon in Sloane's meadow near the Hoosac River in Williamstown, Mass., two piles of hay. The adjoining maple grove still stands, but the haystacks perished long ago. Nevertheless, the site of the northern one is marked by a monument surmounted by a globe and inscribed with these words, above and below a haystack carved out of the marble:

*The Field is the World
The Birthplace of
American Foreign Missions*

1806

SAMUEL J. MILLS

JAMES RICHARDS

FRANCIS L. ROBBINS

HARVEY LOOMIS

BYRAM GREEN

And so long as the monument stands the friends of missions will visit with reverence the spot where five young men, hardly more than boys, prayed the American Board into existence.

Who were these Williams College students? What did they do at this spot? What resulted from their prayer-meeting? Before considering these questions an answer must be given to the query: How did Samuel J. Mills come to utter here those memorable words, "We can do it if we will"?

The haystack prayer-meeting, insignificant in appearance, noble in purpose, sublime in the courage of its participants, and fraught with consequences momentous for the world, was but the breaking forth on a higher plane of the missionary spirit which had burned, now bright, now dim, upon these American shores for nearly two centuries. Great as was the service rendered by Mills and his associates from Williams and other colleges, they were not the first, nor the only ones, inspired with a vision of world conquest for Christ.

Earliest Missionary Efforts.

All the American colonies had a professed missionary purpose. Thus the charter of the Virginia Company, granted in 1606, just two hundred years before the haystack meeting, provided that the colonists were to undertake to propagate "the Christian religion to such people as yet live in darkness and miserable ignorance of the true knowledge and worship of God, and may in time bring the infidels and savages living in those parts to human civility and to a settled and quiet government."

The missionary spirit was especially marked among the settlers of New England. Thus Winslow in his "Briefe Narration" declared one purpose of the Pilgrims to be that they might "not only be a means to enlarge the dominion of the English state, but the church of Christ also, if the Lord had a people among the natives whither he would bring them." To the Puritan colonists who settled in and around Boston, the Massachusetts Bay Company gave instructions that the propagating of the Gospel was "the thing they do profess above all to be their aim in settling this plantation." The first shield of the colony was the device of an Indian with the legend, "Come over and help us."

Though this was the avowed and real purpose

of the colonists in New England, yet it was some time before systematic missionary work was undertaken by them. One reason for this was that they had underestimated the difficulties they would encounter; and the necessity of securing homes, food, and good order absorbed their energies to the full. Besides, for about twenty years it was held that the pagan Indians were to be won by exhibiting to them the colonists' civilization. Even the apostle to the Indians, John Eliot, declared many years later regarding them, "I confess I think no great good will be done till they be more civilized;" and the early colonists held that the Indians were to be civilized before they could be Christianized. They therefore followed the method adopted in Virginia in 1618, and took into their homes Indian boys and girls to train in civilized methods of living. This effort was by no means fruitless. Many Indians became acquainted with the religious views of their masters.

About twenty-five years after the settlement of Plymouth, the people of Massachusetts were ready for more aggressive work, and under the lead of Rev. John Eliot of Roxbury and Thomas Mayhew, father and son, of Martha's Vineyard, a fruitful work was begun which was interrupted and all but ruined by the revulsion of feeling caused by King Philip's War, 1675. The news of the early achievements of Eliot aroused the people of England to an interest in the American Indians. The first of several societies was organized, which worked through local committees in the colonies until the Revolutionary War.

Brauner and His Contemporaries.

The eighteenth century witnessed not only the remarkable religious movement known as the Great Awakening, but also a second period of missionary work. Again the efforts were directed towards the heathen who were in the midst of the

colonists. Moravian missionaries labored for the Indians in the middle colonies, notably Pennsylvania, with a devotion and with a persistency in the face of opposition from natives and colonists that merited the highest praise.

Of the New England missionaries of this period, easily the first in influence was the saintly David Brainerd. His missionary career, first near Albany, and later in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, covered little more than four years; yet his life as portrayed in his published journals has had an influence surpassed by that of few, and was an important factor in the development of Samuel J. Mills. While he endeavored most earnestly to make the Indians Christians, he interested himself in all their life, secured a teacher for them, taught them habits of industry, and formed them into a Christian village.

What Brainerd did in the middle colonies, John Sergeant had earlier achieved in the Housatonic Valley in Massachusetts for the wandering Mohegan Indians, whom, in 1736, he gathered into a new village, Stockbridge. Here Jonathan Edwards preached to the Indians and wrote theological treatises, while the Indians repaid the labors in their behalf by loyal service for the colonies in the War for Independence. Nearly one-half of their young men then perished.

One of the prominent leaders in work for the Indians in the eighteenth century was Eleazer Wheelock of Lebanon, Connecticut, at whose school was educated Samson Occom, a Mohegan Indian. His success in educating Occom suggested to Mr. Wheelock the idea of introducing Indian pupils into his school, and of making it the training school for native missionaries to the heathen tribes. He believed that Indians must be converted by Indians, and that these could best be trained in Christian homes. The results of this effort were less than he had expected, largely because he had underestimated the danger of the

Indians lapsing back into their old life when they returned into 'heathen surroundings. The removal of the school to Hanover, New Hampshire, in 1770, and its affiliation with the newly established Dartmouth College, with Wheelock as president of both institutions, marked the beginning of the end of the school.

At one time Mr. Wheelock and his friends had under their auspices three missionaries and eight teachers among the Indians, while twenty-two were dependent upon them for support. A pupil of Mr. Wheelock, Samuel Kirkland, was the most prominent Congregational Indian missionary in the latter half of the eighteenth century. He worked for a time among the unfriendly Senecas. He was for many years among the Oneidas and was largely instrumental in securing, in 1775, their neutrality in the impending war. Samson Occom was a faithful worker among his own people, laboring on Long Island, for the Oneidas in New York, and in Connecticut. In 1765 he made a successful trip to England to raise funds for the work of Mr. Wheelock. Before and after the Revolution he formed and executed plans for the removal to New York state of the Christian Indians of New England. The purpose was to establish a Christian community in the midst of the Six Nations and also to remove the Christian Indians from competition with the white man, and to a region where their lands would be inalienable and sufficient for their support.

Much of this Indian work was supported by the people of England and Scotland. The good people of Massachusetts were not satisfied with this, and in 1762 the Congregational ministers secured from the colonial legislature a charter for a "Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge among the Indians of North America." The British crown disallowed this charter because the Episcopal clergymen of Boston, most of whom were supported by the Society for the Propagation

of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, feared that it would endanger the interests of their society.

The Broader Vision.

Thus, throughout the colonial period, there was missionary interest in the Indians. The fact that the colonists had heathen at their very doors, and that the means of intercourse with the Orient were so poor and so expensive, confined the work to this side of the Atlantic. Yet there were not wanting those whose vision crossed the ocean and who longed for the day when American Christians would carry to others the Gospel which had done so much for them. Cotton Mather's "Essays to do Good," first published in 1710, was one of the famous religious books of the eighteenth century. It passed through edition after edition in the colonies and in England. Among the things to be desired he mentioned: "The propagation of the holy and glorious religion of Christ. . . . Why is this no more attempted by its professors? Protestants! will you be outdone by Popish idolaters? . . . No less than six hundred clergymen, in the order of the Jesuits alone, have, within a few years, embarked for China, to win over that mighty nation to their bastard Christianity. No less than five hundred of them lost their lives in the difficulties of their enterprise; and yet the survivors go on with it, expressing a sort of regret that it fell not to their share to make the sacrifice of their lives in attempting the propagation of their religion. O my God! I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God! Who can tell what great things might be done if our trading companies and factories would set apart a more considerable part of their gains for this work, and would prosecute it more vigorously? The proposal which Gordon has made at the end of his 'Geography,' that all persons of property would appropriate a small part of their wealth to

this purpose, should be more attentively considered. What has already been done by the Dutch missionaries at Ceylon, and the Danish at Malabar, one would imagine sufficient to excite us to imitate them."

With the few years just preceding the outbreak of the War of Independence began a new phase in the missionary interest in the colonies. This may be said to form a third period. It prepared the way directly for the work of Mills. The two chief features in this period were the first actual attempt to send missionaries abroad and the organization of missionary societies to carry on home missionary work. In these were trained those who were to organize and maintain the missionary movement started at the call of the students. In connection with them also were published missionary periodicals, which told the story of the work abroad, supported by Christians beyond the Atlantic.

Foreign Work Proposed.

So far as known, the first person to suggest definitely that the time had come to take up work in pagan lands was Rev. Samuel Hopkins of Newport, Rhode Island. In 1770 he became pastor of the First Congregational Church, among a rich, commercial, cultured people, much of whose wealth was derived from the slave trade. He became an advocate, not only of abolition, but of sending Christian missions and colonies to Africa. Mr. Hopkins was joined by his neighbor, Rev. Ezra Stiles, later president of Yale, in issuing in 1773 an appeal for funds with which to educate two young colored men, members of the First Church, who were desirous of returning to their homes with the gospel message. A society was organized, money was secured from the colonies and from England, and the embryo missionaries were trained at Princeton and elsewhere. The

outbreak of the war prevented their sailing, and thus was left to Judson, Newell, and their companions the honor of being the first missionaries to sail from this country to non-Christian lands. Samuel Hopkins was a personal friend of Samuel J. Mills, senior, and it is probable that to the Newport minister was due, in part at least, the interest of young Mills in behalf of the Christianization and colonization of Africa by American negroes. It was in this work that Mills laid down his life.

Connecticut Missionary Society.

After the expulsion of the French from North America in 1763, and still more after our treaty with Great Britain in 1783, the tide of emigration set in strongly northward into Vermont and westward into New York, and what is now Ohio. The new settlers were either too poor or too indifferent to secure church privileges, and there was great danger of the growth of irreligion in the frontier communities. To prevent this the Christians of New England began home missionary work, both to furnish the pioneers with preaching and to reach the Indians near the new towns. The state which contributed very largely to this emigration was Connecticut, and it was natural, therefore, that the Congregationalists there should take the lead in efforts to make these new communities Christian. The General Association of Connecticut met at Mansfield in June, 1774, and there voted in favor of raising funds to send missionaries to "the settlements now forming in the wilderness to the westward and northwestward;" that is, in New York and Vermont. The churches responded so favorably that in September the Association voted to send two pastors in the spring of 1775 on a tour of five or six months through the new regions, provided the funds necessary for their support were then in the hands of the committee. The skirmish at Lexington

and the outbreak of the Revolutionary War necessitated the postponement of the plan, but contributions were received, even during the dark days of struggle, and in 1780 the General Association asked two pastors to go to Vermont as missionaries. The churches continued the discussion in 1788 and 1791, and in 1792 they approved a missionary. At the same time they secured permission from the legislature to solicit contributions from the parishes throughout the state. The response was so prompt that, in 1793, eight pastors were named as missionaries to go on tours of four months each. They were to receive the munificent weekly compensation of \$4.50 and an additional \$4.00 a week for the supply of their pulpits. One of these missionaries was the Rev. Samuel J. Mills of Torringford, Connecticut.

Another important step was taken four years later. In 1797 the Connecticut General Association consulted the local associations of the state regarding the formation of a missionary society, and on June 19, 1798, it constituted itself a missionary society "to Christianize the heathen in North America and to support and promote Christian knowledge in the new settlements within the United States." Five years later, the Connecticut legislature granted a regular charter to the Connecticut Missionary Society. In 1800 the friends of missions in Connecticut began the publication of the *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine*.



ADONIRAM JUDSON

Home Missionary Movement.

The Congregationalists of Connecticut were not alone in their interest in missions. Similar action was taken in Massachusetts at almost the same time. It was, however, decided to make the scope of the society broad enough to include more

than home missions. Its constitution of 1799 declared that its object was "to diffuse the knowledge of the Gospel among the heathen as well as other people in the remote parts of the earth where Christ is seldom or never preached." Five years later an amendment was adopted which still further broadened its scope and distinctly declared that the society had in view work abroad as well as in the home field. The provision of 1804 read: "The object of the society is to diffuse the Gospel among the people of the newly settled and remote parts of our country, among the Indians of the country, and through more distant regions of the earth, as circumstances shall invite and the ability of the society shall admit." So much attention was devoted by this society to remote regions that it was deemed wise a little later to organize a Domestic Missionary Society to care for the needs of Massachusetts. This society was later merged in the Massachusetts Missionary Society, when, after the formation of the American Board, it became strictly domestic. Following the example of Connecticut, the society voted in 1802 to issue the *Massachusetts Missionary Magazine*, but it was not until the next year, after Rev. Samuel Worcester of Salem was added to the committee, that the first number was issued. It was published at Salem in June, 1803.

The missionary movement spread rapidly. In 1801 the New Hampshire Missionary Society was formed, and in 1807 the General Convention of Vermont began to act as a missionary society. Besides these state organizations, there were local organizations with the missionary purpose. The women, also, were interested. The first missionary organization for women, the Boston Female Society for Missionary Purposes, was constituted in October, 1800, and four years later there was founded in New Hampshire the Female Cent Institution, the members of which were pledged to contribute one cent a week to missions.

The Congregationalists were not alone in this new movement. Even before the decisive action of Connecticut, the Presbyterians had moved. In 1780 two missionaries were sent from Hartford County, Connecticut, to Vermont, and in 1789 the first General Assembly passed an order requiring the churches under its care to take up collections for a missionary fund. The *New York Theological Magazine*, which contained some articles of missionary intelligence in addition to its doctrinal discussions, began publication in July, 1795, followed five years later, Jan. 1, 1800, by the *New York Missionary Magazine and Repository of Intelligence*, whose chief purpose was to report religious and missionary news. A still more important publication was the General Assembly's *Missionary Magazine or Religious Intelligencer*, first issued in January, 1805. It soon took in some respects the highest rank among such American periodicals. The Baptist churches in Massachusetts were likewise interested. The Baptist Missionary Society of Massachusetts was formed in 1802 and the next year, at the request of this society, Dr. Baldwin of Boston commenced the publication of the *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, which circulated throughout the northern states, and contained journals of missionaries on the frontier, accounts of revivals, and missionary intelligence from abroad.

Meantime, important events had occurred both here and in England which had an important bearing upon the missionary movement in America.

English Missionary Awakening

In England the missionary enterprise had had a new birth. Under the lead of William Carey, "the consecrated cobbler" and linguist, the Baptists had been aroused, had organized the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792, and had sent Carey and his companion, Dr. Thomas, to India the fol-

lowing year. Under his guidance the Serampore mission was established, and the remarkable work of evangelism, education, and the translation and publication of the Bible was well under way. The non-Baptists of England had also organized in 1795 The Missionary Society, later known as the London Missionary Society, had sent a large force to the South Seas, and had begun work in South Africa. The stricter Anglicans, who did not care to coöperate with the Non-conformists, had established, in 1799, the Church Missionary Society. Melville Horne, formerly chaplain in Sierra Leone, had published in 1794 his searching "Letters on Missions," in which he pleaded with the clergy of England to take up the work abroad. This book and other missionary literature, such as the sermons preached at the organization of the London Missionary Society, had reached America, been reprinted here, and were arousing the people. Accounts of missionary work abroad were printed in nearly every number of such publications as the *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine*, the *Massachusetts Missionary Magazine*, and the *Panoplist*. American Christians were contributing to the work of Carey, six thousand dollars being remitted in the years 1806 and 1807. Morrison, the pioneer to China, went to that nation by the way of New York, so that many Americans had actually seen a missionary.

Revivals in New England

Almost simultaneously with this movement abroad there came a revival of religion in New England, especially in Litchfield county, Connecticut. The times were ripe for it, because vital religion was very feeble at the close of the eighteenth century. French infidelity had become so popular that in 1795 most of the students at Yale were skeptics and men called one another by such names as Voltaire and Rousseau.

In eastern Massachusetts the revival took the form of a differentiation between the conservatives and those who were soon to separate in the Unitarian schism. The Massachusetts General Association was formed in 1803 by the conservative element. Steps were taken to secure theological training under orthodox auspices, and this resulted in the opening of Andover Seminary in 1808. While the primary purpose of this was theological, one of the generous benefactors, John Norris of Salem, refused to assist until convinced that without such an institution no missionaries could be sent to India and the East. The truth is, that without this meeting-place for students from Williams, Union, Harvard, and Brown, there could have been no such united effort as came in 1810, and the men of the Haystack would have had a far more difficult task in arousing the churches to action.

Williamstown

While these events were occurring in Massachusetts, an equally important work was going on in Connecticut. The Spirit of God was working mightily in the churches of Litchfield county. So widespread was it that Rev. Edward D. Griffin, later professor at Andover, pastor of Park Street Church, Boston, and president of Williams College, declared that in 1797 he could stand at his door in New Hartford, Connecticut, and count fifty to sixty congregations in contiguous counties "laid down in one field of divine wonder." From these towns a small procession of students was going to Williams College, recently organized in 1793, among the Berkshire Hills of Massachusetts. The influence of these men was needed, for in the fall of 1800 there were but two Christian students in the institution, both of these the fruits of the Connecticut revival. Through these men and those who joined them the new spirit began to creep into the

college. Their influence was seconded by a revival at Williamstown which began in the spring of 1805 and continued for two or three years. This helped to arouse the students to an interest in religion. In April, 1806, to the freshman class, which already contained James Richards, was added a young man from Litchfield County. This was none other than Samuel J. Mills, only recently a Christian, but already filled with the missionary spirit.

Samuel J. Mills

Samuel J. Mills, Jr. was the son of the pastor at Torringford, Connecticut, where he was born April 21, 1783. "Father Mills," as he was called, was a somewhat eccentric preacher, a leader in the revival movement, a missionary under the Connecticut Missionary Society in 1793, and an editor of the *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine*, which published so much missionary news. Mrs. Mills a woman of beautiful Christian character, made herself the confidante of her youngest boy, who brought to her his doubts and difficulties and to whom she spoke of Eliot, of Brainerd, and of other missionaries. She was once overheard by him to say, "I have consecrated this child to the service of God as a missionary." A remarkable revival which occurred in his town when he was fifteen passed him by, though he was deeply impressed with his sinfulness, and reproached God for not granting him salvation. In November, 1801, as he was starting to enter Morris Academy, he exclaimed to his mother, in answer to her question, "O that I had never been born! For two years I have been sorry God ever made me." His mother instantly replied, "My son, you are born, and you can never throw off your existence nor your everlasting accountability for all your conduct;" and then she retired to her room to pray for her boy. The prayers were answered, and

before he reached his destination the vision burst upon him. He no longer rebelled against the arbitrariness of God; peace came and he arrived at the academy rejoicing in his new hope. Almost immediately the missionary thought entered his mind, and when he returned home he told his father that he "could not conceive of any course of life . . . that would prove so pleasant as to go and communicate the Gospel salvation to the poor heathen."

A little later he decided to place in other hands the farm he had inherited, and he entered Williams to secure the education needed

for missionary work. He threw himself at once into the revival work in town and college.



WEST COLLEGE (IN WHICH MILLS ROOMED)

The Haystack Meeting

In that memorable summer of 1806 it was the custom of a few Christian students to go to the bottom of the valley, south of West college, every Wednesday afternoon for prayer. Saturday afternoon, when they had more leisure, they went in the opposite direction, and held their meeting in the meadow near the haystack. It was in this latter direction that the five young men went on that historic afternoon. Let one of these, Byram Green, tell the story:

"Samuel J. Mills, James Richards, Francis L. Robbins, Harvey Loomis, and Byram Green were present. The afternoon was oppressively

warm, which probably detained all those from the East College that usually attended, and some from the West. We first went to the grove, expecting to hold our prayer-meeting there, but a dark cloud was rising in the west, and it soon began to thunder and lighten, and we left the grove and went under the haystack to protect us from the approaching storm, which was soon realized.

"The subject of conversation under the stack before and during the shower was the moral darkness of Asia. Mills proposed to send the Gospel to that dark and heathen land; and said that we could do it if we would. We were all agreed and delighted with the idea except Loomis, who contended that it was premature; and that if missionaries should be sent to Asia they would be murdered; that Christian armies must subdue the country before the Gospel could be sent to the Turks and Arabs. In reply to Loomis it was said that God was always willing to have his Gospel spread throughout the world; that if the Christian public was willing and active, the work would be done; that on this subject the Roman adage would be true, 'Vox populi, vox Dei.' 'Come,' said Mills, 'let us make it a subject of prayer, under this haystack, while the dark clouds are going, and the clear sky is coming.'

"We all prayed and made Foreign Missions a subject in our prayers, except Loomis. Mills made the last prayer and was in some degree enthusiastic; he prayed that God would strike down the arm with the red artillery of heaven that should be raised against a herald of the cross. We then sang one stanza. It was as follows:

'Let all the heathen writers join
To form one perfect book;
Great God, if once compared with thine,
How mean their writings look.'

"The prayer-meetings were continued during the warm season of that year, in the groves some-

where between the village and the Hoosac, and the subject of Foreign Missions was remembered in our prayers."

When the meetings could no longer be held in the grove on account of the lateness of the season, they were held in the kitchen of a good woman, who soon left the door ajar that she might share in the meetings, and who later invited her neighbors to attend. With the approach of warm weather the outdoor meetings were resumed. They were continued during the summer of 1807.

Thus, as Dr. Rufus Anderson said in 1843, "The first personal consecrations to the work of effecting missions among foreign heathen nations" on the part of American youth were made at Williams-town on some unknown afternoon, one hundred years ago this summer.

The Brethren

Had Mills and his friends stopped at this point, there would have been no haystack monument. They not only prayed that the way might be opened for service abroad, but they proceeded to answer their own prayers. The next step was not taken until two years later, when, after months of prayerful discussion, five young men, Samuel J. Mills, Ezra Fiske, James Richards, John Seward, and Luther Rice, met September 7, 1808, in the northwest lower room of old East College, and signed the constitution of The Brethren. This was a secret organization, the purpose of which was "to effect in the persons of its members a mission or missions to the heathen." Each member pledged himself not only "to keep inviolably secret the existence of this society," but also to "keep absolutely free from any engagement, which, after his careful attention and after consultation with The Brethren, shall be



JAMES RICHARDS

deemed incompatible with the object of this society," and to "hold himself in readiness to go on a mission when and where duty may call."

This little society proved one of the influential organizations of history, and furnished for years a large number of missionaries to the American Board. While its very existence was long unknown, its story, as yet unpublished, would reveal mighty achievements. From Mills to Nee-sima, its membership included many of the great American missionaries. Attempts were made to form similar organizations in other institutions, but with only partial success. The constitution of The Brethren was transferred to Andover in 1810 and the first names added there were those of Adoniram Judson, Jr., Samuel Newell, and Samuel Nott, Jr. Judson, with his commanding, even imperious nature, soon took the lead, while Mills, modest and willing to efface himself so long as the work was done, kept in the background.

From the beginning, Mills and his friends at Williams sought to enlist others in the cause, for they believed that many missionary candidates would impress the church with the need of devising generous things, more than would a few. They found that they were not the only ones desirous of attempting great things for God. Nettleton, the great evangelist, was then a student at Yale, and in him Mills found a kindred spirit, though he was unable to go abroad. Samuel Nott became impressed with the need of missionary work while studying with his father at his Connecticut home, and he entered Andover in this spirit. Judson, who was not even a Christian when he entered Andover, was soon converted, and before long became zealous in the new cause. Whether his decision was due in part to the influence of The Brethren then in Andover, will never be known. His thoughts were all directed towards the East, while Mills, with a truly statesmanlike view, then and later had in mind, not

only India and the East, but also Africa, South America, the Hawaiian Islands, the Indian tribes, and the unchurched regions of the south and west. The divine ferment having leavened young men from various colleges, and Andover Seminary having brought them together, so that they could confer and plan, the problem of men was in a fair way towards solution.

American Board Organized

The next task was that of arousing the churches to support a new forward movement. To this end The Brethren reprinted and circulated missionary sermons and books, spent their vacations with clergymen whom they might interest in their projects, and in every way called the attention of ministers and laymen to the needs of the field. While they had kept their organization secret because of modesty and the fear of exciting opposition by their proposals, they soon found that there were those already impressed with the need of action, though perhaps somewhat slow to take the initiative. Judson, in his impatience at delay, had written to the London Missionary Society to inquire if they would send out several young men from America; yet it was in accordance with the advice of such men as Rev. Samuel Worcester of Salem, Rev. Samuel Spring of Newburyport, and Jeremiah Evarts, Esq., of Charlestown, that on Thursday afternoon, June 28, 1810, four young men, Judson, Nott, Mills, and Newell, appeared before the Massachusetts General Association in session at Bradford, and presented their statement and inquiries. Providential it was that seven years before the conservative and missionary ministers of Massachusetts had formed this organization, and that to it were sent that year some



SAMUEL NEWELL.

of those who had long been desirous of seeing the American churches support representatives across the seas. The appeal of the young men met with a ready response, and on the following day the association appointed nine commissioners to constitute the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and to devise measures by which the four applicants might be supported in foreign lands. A little less than two years later, three of the four applicants, with two others, actually sailed for the East, while Mills devoted the few remaining years of his life to exploring possible mission fields, arousing Christians to their responsibilities, and inspiring the organization of various missionary and benevolent societies. He died in 1818 while returning from Africa, whither he had gone to secure a location for a Christian settlement for American negroes.

Thus the whole history of the Congregational churches prepared the way for the answering of the prayers around the haystack; the young men there gathered and their friends were used of God to arouse into activity the dormant, though real, foreign missionary spirit of the church; and history has justified the sublime faith of the young man who declared to his college mates in an obscure college in a remote New England town, "We can do it if we will." The modern missionary movement in America may truthfully be said to have had its birth upon the spot where was held

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